

CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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NO. 32.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xiii. 34.

SERMON.

(Continued from page 123)

It is recollected that we have an account in the book of Revelation, of seven vials, which contain the seven last plagues; but the seven angels who were appointed to pour them out, were ordered to pour them out upon the earth; they were not directed to reserve one for the future, eternal world.

The hearer may be called on to consider the question, whether, if the seven last plagues, are plagues to be endured in this life, the notion of endless plagues in the world to come, be correct?

Our next object is to determine, by the testimony of Jesus, the time when he said he would make his appearance to judge and reward men according to their works. Our divines have constantly contended that this is not while time lasts with man on the earth, but it is an event to take place hereafter in a future state of existence. With this their opinion we will compare the divine testimony.

As recorded in Matt. xvi. 27, 28, our blessed Redeemer says; "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." In this passage the following facts are particularly expressed. 1st. That the Son of man would certainly make his appearance in his Father's glory with his angels. 2d. That at that time he would reward every man according to his works, 3d. That the time of his coming, and judging, and rewarding every man according to his works, would commence during the natural life of those who heard this declaration.

Again, in chapter xxiii. 34—36, "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge

in your synagogues; and persecute them from city to city. That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." See the divine teacher on the same subject in the 24th chapter, 30—35. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." In all the sayings of the blessed Saviour is there any thing more positively or more plainly laid down than what is expressed in the foregoing quotations? If it had been the special intention of Jesus to leave direct testimony against what our divines have set up relative to the last judgment, can we think of words which could have been better chosen?

If the Son of man did not come to judge and reward men according to their works in the generation in which he lived, died, and arose, his word has passed away, but heaven and earth remain. Let it be remarked, that Jesus was still dwelling on the subject of his coming with his angels, with power and great glory, as seen in the 24th chapter, when he spake of the judgment in the 25th, which our doctors have uniformly called the last judgment. In the judgment described, where the pa-

table of sheep and goats is used, the rewards are according to men's works; but is there a real christian in the world, who is but superficially acquainted with the scriptures, that does not know, that the salvation of the gospel is not according to the works of the saved?

Many passages direct to this point might be quoted; let one suffice, 2 Tim. i. 9. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to his own works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Is it not utterly impossible to reconcile the notion of endless rewards and punishments according to our works, with the gospel testimony of our being saved, not according to our works, but according to the purpose and grace of God, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began? The doctrine of judging and rewarding men according to their works is the plain doctrine which Jesus preached, but let it be remembered that he never put off the day of judgment to a future state of existence.

Let us notice what he has said further on this subject. See Mark, vii. 38, ix. 1. "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels. And he said unto them, verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." This is again recorded in the 9th. of Luke.

If our divine Redeemer, that blessed teacher, sent from God intended to give countenance and support to the common doctrine of the last judgment, would he have been particular, whenever he spake of coming to judgment, to confine the time to the generation in which he lived on the earth.

We have now come to our subject

in such a way that we must turn our backs, either on the testimony of the wisdom of this world which cometh to naught, or on the testimony of Jesus, for if we believe the latter we cannot believe the former. This is a trying point, and your servant knows how to pity his fellow creatures in this situation. He has been called to this trial long ago; and a serious trial it was. On one side stood our learned divines, our esteemed and reverend ministers, his honoured, reverend and pious parent, religious connections and the church to which he had joined himself in the sincerity and simplicity of his heart. On the other was seen the positive testimony of his Redeemer, "What was I that I could withstand God."

Will you come to a decision on this important subject, or will you endeavour to get it out of your minds and evade the force of scripture? But remember, the superstition, the bigotry, the stubbornness of the human heart can never sanctify error.

Having produced the authority of the Saviour on the subject of his coming to judge and reward men according to their works, let our next inquiry be directed to ascertain the occasion and object of the punishment described in our text. Notice; "taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." What is this vengeance taken for? Because they know not God, and because they obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But will this vengeance, this punishment operate to bring them to a knowledge of God, and to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? If this vengeance and punishment mean endless sufferings in the eternal world, the punished will not thereby be brought to know God, whom to know is life eternal; nor to obey the gospel, whose law is the law of love.

You ask a kind and faithful earthly father why he uses the rod of chastisement on his son? He informs you it is because his child is disobedient. You ask him if he intends that punishment as a mean to reclaim his child, and to produce that obedience required? He answers in the affirmative. You are satisfied with this principle and its application. You can pity the folly of

childish disobedience, but you anticipate that the fruits of righteousness and filial love will more than counterbalance the present trial.

You ask the wisdom of this world, why God will punish men? It replies; because they know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son. You ask this same wisdom whether this punishment be designed as a mean to bring them to the knowledge of God, and to obey the gospel? It answers in the negative. If you expostulate, if you attempt to reason, if you call such extravagant doctrine to an account, you are soon made to understand that this wisdom is the reverse of that which is from above, which "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Some remarks on the nature and design of punishment may be proper in this place. But as convenience requires, we may observe concisely. All punishment must be pursuant to law, and law cannot punish only for the transgression of its precepts; of course, that punishment which must of necessity perpetuate criminality, is equally as opposed to the law of God as it is to the reformation of the disobedient. By this argument it is seen at once, that the doctrine of never-ending punishment is opposed to the very nature of justice, as such punishment must of necessity be connected with durable transgression.

The nature of the flaming fire, mentioned in our text, may next be noticed.

Concluded in our next.

"THE PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE."

The first number of this "monthly publication" has been recently put into our hands, by which it appears that it is "conducted by the following reverend gentlemen; viz. Rev. J. J. Janeway, D. D. Rev. J. P. Wilson, D. D. Rev. G. C. Potts, Rev. J. Banks, D. D. Rev. J. Brodhead, D. D. Rev. S. B. Wylie, D. D. Rev. W. Neill, D. D. Rev. E. S. Ely, D. D. Rev. T. H. Skinner, Rev. R. M'Cartee, Rev. B. Hoff, and Rev. W. M. Engles." From such a host of combined talent, we

should have anticipated much fruit; and it may perhaps have been expected that such a union of high sounding titles might, and would, look down every thing like opposition. Lest it should not, however, they tell us in the Preface, "This Magazine is NOT intended to be a controversial work." Yet they say, "Its pages will, nevertheless, be fearlessly devoted to the maintenance of the doctrines of grace;" by which we understand them to mean the *grace* inculcated by Presbyterians, which has always been known to be limited and partial. "The enemy," say they, "is sowing his tares with unusual assiduity;" by which they seem to think that "they are loudly called upon to hold forth the word of truth." In this opinion we perfectly coincide with them; and we thank them for this application of the words of our Saviour, which, till now, we think have always been misapplied by Presbyterians; viz. "an enemy has done this." Done what? Answer: "sowed tares among the wheat." These tares we have ever contended to mean false doctrines, and we are very happy to see these reverend gentlemen now using the word in the same sense. We should have extended these remarks further; but a *review* of the work before us, which has this moment been presented for publication, will prevent the necessity of any further remarks at this time. As the doctrine here advanced by Dr. Wylie, one of the above named reverend gentlemen, is in direct opposition to that which has been advanced by Dr. Ely, (which we noticed in the First Volume of the Christian Messenger, No. 37. p. 147. and which, perhaps, we shall notice more particular hereafter,) it will be pleasing to see how the latter gentleman will manage this matter; whether he will let it pass in silence, or whether he will come out in defence of what he has heretofore published. If he does the former, it will look a little like giving up the ground he has taken; if the latter, what will it be but controversy? But more of this hereafter.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The Correspondence from Pittsford, N. Y. is unavoidably postponed until next week.

Christian Messenger.*Philadelphia, Saturday, March 10, 1821.*

FOR THE MESSENGER.

THE PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE—
Conducted by Drs. Janeway—Wilson
—Banks—Brodhead—Wylie—Neill
—Ely,—and the Reverend Messrs.
Potts—Skinner—M'Cartee—Hoff and
Engles.—No. 1. Vol. I. January 1821.
—Littel & Henry, Publishers.

Emanating from so high a source as a society composed of the heads of all the Presbyterian Churches in Philadelphia, and from the known abilities of the majority of the gentlemen engaged in conducting it, our anticipations with respect to the work before us, were in the highest degree favourable, but, from the specimen afforded us by the subject matter of the first number, which now lies upon our table, we doubt very much whether these anticipations will in any degree be realized—For neither in matter, nor in manner, do the contents, in any degree rise above even mediocrity.

The primary intention of the work, is, avowedly the defence and promulgation of the peculiar tenets of the Presbyterian Church, and in this labour, the reverend conductors appear to be determined that their own assertions, as far as they are able, shall be silently received by the world, as truth,—their pages being closed against any arguments, however convincing, which may be offered against the arguments advanced by them, for such is certainly the meaning of the declaration that “the magazine is not intended to be a controversial work.”

The conductors, appear, also, at the very outset of their work, to oppose every thing of a liberal spirit with respect to those who differ from them on any of their fundamental doctrines—The Trinity—The divinity of Christ—original sin—imputed righteousness—the new birth—and a future state of rewards and eternal punishments—These are declared to be essential to christianity. The sincere believer in them, we are assured shall be saved, [page 11, col. 1.] while those who reject them, are stigmatized as *deists*, “cut off from the visible church of Christ.”—The God

they worship is declared to be an idol of their imaginations, [page 25, col. 1.] That only those who teach the above doctrines are divinely commissioned, or should be permitted to minister in the temple, or break the bread of life to the enquiring multitude, [page 27, col. 2.] The teachers of other doctrines, it is declared, should not be received into the houses of the orthodox, and, that attending on their ministry is sinful, [page 27, col. 2.] This no doubt is the spirit of the doctrine, upheld by the reverend conductors, but, there is naught in it of that spirit inculcated by the blessed doctrines of Christ. To call it by the name of christianity, would be to insult its blessed founder!

The three first articles in this number, on “Revelation accordant with reason,”—on “Proclaiming and hearing the Gospel,” and on “The importance &c. of revealed truth,” contain nothing new; they assert popular errors, while but little of Scripture authority, and less of argument are attempted to be brought forward in their support. We have thought it quite unnecessary to enter into any minute examination of these essays, as all that is advanced in them must stand or fall with the truth or falsehood of the general tenets inculcated by Calvinistic Theology, and as our limits would not permit us, at the present time, to enter into a review of the arguments and scripture texts by which these latter are refuted, we pass them by now, and proceed to the next essay, which, as it contains an attack upon some of the doctrines we maintain, demands more particular attention.

Remarks on the duration of future punishment, by S. B. Wylie, D. D.

This is the fourth article in this number, and from the very important subject discussed—the late period of the dispute at which it has appeared—and the talents of the reverend author, we may presume it to contain an abstract of the best and most convincing arguments that can now be offered against the doctrine of universal salvation, but like all other attempts which have gone before it, to overturn the revealed declaration of God, *that all mankind shall be saved*, it also falls very short of effecting its purpose, and we feel confident that all who peruse it with candour, will be induced no longer to uphold doctrines, which have no other defence

against the powerful arguments which have been brought against them, than the flimsy sophistry contained in the article before us.

After a short introduction, in which justice, is very properly declared to be a natural, necessary, and inexorable attribute of Jehovah. The writer attempts to show that “if the punishment of sin be not eternal, its limitation to a definite period, must arise either from personal expiation, or vicarious atonement, or blank annihilation.” He can form, he says, “no conception of any other mode of its termination, and if it can be demonstrated, that the termination of punishment pleaded for by Universalists, cannot arise from any of these three causes,” he shall without hesitation “pronounce it *eternal*.”

We contend, that neither of these three modes, are capable of expiating either sin, or the punishment due to sin—excepting the latter, which, however, is dishonourary to God, and equally unscriptural with the two former. With respect to imputing Christ's righteousness to those who have no personal righteousness of their own, this appears to us to be a perfect absurdity—how that one being, only because he is good and perfect, and has undergone a punishment, can render another being happy, unless that other being has been rendered good and perfect also, we can never understand—because, it is a subject upon which we can derive no light from divine revelation, its pages being perfectly silent with respect to any such mode of expiating guilt, and it is one directly contrary to what human reason would teach us.

Universalists believe in a God who is just, but they believe him to be equally merciful—they believe that no punishment that sin merits, will ever be forgiven; but, they cannot believe that eternal misery can be a necessary consequence of sin, unless it be proven that sin also is eternal, and that sin is not eternal, they know, because, they are taught by divine revelation, that, iniquity shall be finished, (Isa. 21.) That all flesh shall come to God, who will purge away all our transgressions (Ps. lxxv. lxxxvi. 1 Tim. ii. Jeremiah xxxiii. John iii. Heb. ix. and x.) That he will have all men to be saved, and to effect this glorious purpose sent his only Son into the world, (Psal. lxxii. Isaiah lxi.

Acts xxvi. Ephes. i. Phil. ii. Col. i. Rom. viii. 1 John iii. 1 John iv. St. John i. 29, &c. &c. &c.

Universalists believe in the God of the Bible, a God of almighty power, who is capable and willing to remove the veil of moral darkness which is cast over all people, a God who requires not sacrifice, but forgives sin only upon sincere repentance, (Luke xxiv. Acts xxvi.)—they believe in the declaration of inspiration, that eternal life is the free gift of God, (Rom. v, vi. 2 Corinth. ix. Hebrews vi. James i.) and not that it was forced from him by the infinite sufferings which he himself underwent while disguised in the form of man.

We pass over without observation, much common place assertion, to come at once to what appears to be the very pith and marrow of this Essay.—The defence of the infinity of human transgression: and here, we fear Dr. Wylie will find that he has conceded to his opponents too much, for the good of the cause he advocates. "If," he says, "the idea of the infinity of man's transgression be done away, it would render eternal punishment for sin, not only unnecessary, but unjust," (page 18, col. 2.) The idea of the infinite nature of sin, has already, and can again be proven, to be absurd, unscriptural, and of a dangerous tendency, by arguments the most convincing, arguments which have never been answered; while, on the other hand, nothing but mere assertion has been brought forward in defence of the doctrine. But more of this hereafter.

"It is inconsistent both with physical and mathematical science," observes Dr. Wylie, "to maintain that the doctrine of the infinity of sin, goes to establish the old stoical dogma, that all sins are equal," and this he attempts to prove by telling us, that though an inch is equally infinitely divisible with the diameter of the orbit of Saturn, "yet, it will not hence follow, that these two lines are equal."—That though every number, and every fraction of a number are equally divisible *ad infinitum*, yet, he asks, will it from thence be inferred they are equal;—Even admitting for a moment, the infinite divisibility of measure and of numbers, yet every one must perceive, that the examples are not at all applicable to the subject they are intended to support and illustrate, in the examples adduced, infinity relates

to the *divisibility* and not to the magnitude of the objects, whereas in relation to sin, it is applied to its *magnitude*. What is sin? It is replied, that it is a violation of the law of God. *Every* sin must be therefore *equally* a violation of the law of God. The law of God being infinite, say our opponents, every violation of it is an infinite evil. That is to say, an evil of infinite magnitude, for it cannot be supposed that the term is applied to it in any other sense. It cannot be applied to it with respect to its duration, for then, every being who has ever committed a sin, must of necessity be eternally sinful, and they would be entirely precluded from the hope or possibility of salvation.

What is the necessary conclusion from the above reasoning, admitting it to be true. It is that every sin is of infinite magnitude. Now the most trifling sin can be no less than of infinite magnitude—the greatest no more—consequently, every sin must be equal. The stealing of a piece of bread to satisfy the cravings of hunger—and the premeditated murder of a parent or a child. The slightest offence against the law of God, and the blackest and most atrocious deed that we can possibly conceive of.

To render this evident to every capacity, it may be necessary to observe, that the term infinite, implies, without bounds, without limits, or in other words, every thing of magnitude, that we now can, or ever will be able to conceive of.

If the doctrine of the infinity of sin be true, we will not merely assert that every sin is equal, but we will go still further, and assert, that all the sins committed by all mankind, from the beginning of the world to the present time added together, are not of greater magnitude than the most trifling sin committed by a single individual. For, if one sin be of infinite magnitude, all added together cannot be more than of infinite magnitude. In infinity, there are no degrees—no gradations, we cannot subtract from it, nor add to it.

If sin be infinite, and all mankind without distinction have sinned, and the justice of God will not permit him to forgive sin without an equivalent satisfaction, how are any saved? By the sufferings, it is replied of the *God-man*, Christ—but, how can the most intense

sufferings of hours or even years be infinite. The sufferings of the humanity of Christ could not have been infinite, this is admitted by the writer under consideration. It was the sufferings of his divinity, we are informed, that were infinite. Divinity!—one of whose necessary qualities is infinite and perfect happiness, suffer infinite misery!—a misery equal in magnitude to his happiness!—Can there be found any one so profane, as to entertain even for a moment, the blasphemous idea! If infinite suffering were once inflicted on Deity, it may again be inflicted on him, and we have no surety, if this theory be true, that God may not be infinitely miserable in eternity. * * *

TO BE CONTINUED.

FROM THE UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE.

REV. SIR,—I wish to put a question to our Calvinistic and Armenian brethren through the medium of your paper, to which I expect a categorical answer. The Almighty has declared by the mouth of his prophet Isaiah, "That he will not be wroth forever, lest the spirits should fail before him and the souls he has made. God is not a man that he should lie; nor the son of man that he should repent" therefore, what he says will be done. Now in the face of Scripture they assert, that God will be wroth to the endless ages of eternity with the greatest part of the human race, and that when millions of ages have rolled away their torments will be no nearer ending than at the close of one hour. I wish they would inform us how to reconcile their statement with the declaration of Jehovah? By so doing, they would much gratify many persons, and none more than myself.

Your Friend, &c.

K.

Cambridge, Dec. 9, 1820.

JUST PUBLISHED.

AND for sale at No. 58 CHESNUT ST. Price \$1.

A Series of Letters,

In defence of Divine Revelation: in reply to Rev. Abner Kneeland's serious enquiries into the authenticity of the same, by

HOSEA BALLOU, Pastor of the Second Universalist Society in Boston.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A Religious Correspondence,

Between the Rev. Hosea Ballou, and the Rev. Dr. Joseph Buckminster, and Rev. Joseph Walton, Pastors of Congregational Churches in Portsmouth, N. H.